

Teaching in a Non-traditional Academic Programs: a Case Study of the Program Development and Management as Well as Student Recruitment and Retention

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Abstract

Traditional academic programs such as chemistry, engineering, and business administration have long been the backbone of higher education institutions. These programs are well-established, recognized by students and parents, and supported by a strong faculty and student body. However, as workforce needs evolve, traditional academic programs may need to be modified or new programs developed to suit emerging industries and specialized professional demands. The Northeastern State University (NSU), a regional teaching university in the state of Oklahoma with campuses in Tahlequah and Broken Arrow (BA), recognizes the importance of adapting to these changes. The NSU's Environmental, Health, and Safety Management (EHSM) program is an example of a non-traditional academic program designed to cater to regional employment needs with a student body largely populated with working adults and experienced professionals. The author has been a faculty member in the EHSM program for almost fifteen (15) years and has been involved in curriculum development and student recruitment. In addition, the course delivery modes have been evolving from traditional classroom to asynchronous online delivery. The purpose of this presentation is to share key learnings, tips, and challenges encountered while developing and managing the EHSM program, as well as student recruitment and retention. The author does recognize that the presentation focuses solely on the EHSM program at NSU. However, the strategies and experience in this case study can be applied to other non-traditional programs at universities aiming to meet the demands of today's dynamic workforce.

Keywords: Traditional Students; Non-Traditional Students; Traditional Academic Program; Non-Traditional Academic Program; Environmental, Health, And Safety Management; Recruitment; Retention